

NASA Astrobiology Academy

Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, California

Week 1 of the Academy June 24th - July 1st, 2001

Written by:

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Houston, NAABA01 here. Due to a strenuous week of extravehicular activities (as well as vehicular ones) we were rendered out of contact. Following are the logs of our Academy mission thus far:

Sunday: Crew @ maximum capacity - thirteen eager RA's take their positions. Successful liftoff of the Silver Bullet and the Green Machine (our main modes of transport for this summer's mission). All mission specialists deployed their payload @ Phi Sig and set up their rooms, then went to the mid-deck (Doug and Christy's) to eat. Snapple and cake proved remarkably efficient rations for journey ahead. After we "cooled our engines" in the O'Handley jacuzzi, we headed home for the night.

Monday: After an earth-shatteringly inspirational mission briefing from their 4 commanders (Orientation with Doug, Joe, Andy and Natacha), the Academy-ites left ready to conquer the universe! 13 door-to-door deliveries were made to 13 lucky PI's. The day was followed by further mission briefing and task delegation after dinner at the first all-crew meeting where rules, regulations, and responsibilities were discussed.

Tuesday: Our teambuilding day! Via plastic spacecraft model assembly, we were run through a simulation of every piece of NASA red tape in existence. It appeared as if the leaders were against us in the worst and purest form of bureaucratic torture known to man. One of our commanders stole our service module. Another claimed to be on our side but really was less help than a jar of mayonnaise. The third testified against us in a sexual harassment suit, and the fourth wielded amazing power with the stroke of a pen and a Jimmy Buffett lei. We retaliated with sleep-ins, Academy tricks, and shouting. Despite all this, we flourished and prevailed in our mission to rebuild the Saturn V and refurbish the Shuttle. A sigh of relief was breathed by all as we even finished ahead of schedule!

Wednesday: First day of "real work" with our PI's. After meeting with them on Monday to discuss expectations and outline what we were to do, it was now time to roll up our sleeves and get down to it. The RA's attacked their assigned tasks with vigor. as well as began collaboration on the dreaded

"group project". Questions abounded and discussion began.

Thursday: Received an inspirational lift from Dr. Baruch Blumberg, Director of the NASA Astrobiology Institute. He talked about how to do science, and find answers to the tough questions. Deductive vs. inductive science, and cross-generational studies were some of the topics raised. Hopefully our mission will be as successful as his life's journey so far!

Friday: First contact with another civilization! (Hence forth dubbed "The Goddard Academy.") They seemed quite eager to communicate, as well as we. The opportunity for collaboration was rising and both sides considered the pros and cons of such interaction. After consulting with Prof. Twigg at Stanford and seeing all his awesome satellite projects, further decisions were made as to helping with their group project, "Bacterium I," which they will hopefully send to the moon to monitor reproduction.

Saturday: Adventure in San Francisco. After this day of mandated R&R at the Exploratorium, Fisherman's Wharf, Ghiradelli Square, Chinatown and the Stinking Rose, and a bit of dancing took place so wacky it would look better had we actually been in zero-G. The Academy-ites eventually went to bed with a renewed spirit for work and the group project. And a really big nightlight in the hallway, incidentally NOT pointing to the bathroom.

Sunday: The wake-up call from Earth was not until 12pm for most of our crewmembers. More group project discussion was had and a NASA Academy Alumni Association BBQ finished off the week. We were joined by Wendy Davis of the 98 Academy and Brennan Gantner of the 99 crew and a good time was had by all.

We hope that communication with Houston will be less remiss in weeks to come. Stay tuned. NAABA01 out.

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Responsible NASA Official: [Dr. Donald DeVincenzi](#)